

# The Confessor's Tongue for October 28, A. D. 2012

21st Sunday after Pentecost: Matrys Terence & Neonila; Parasceva; Job of Pochaev  
In honor of St. Maximus the Confessor, whose tongue and right hand were cut off in an attempt by compromising authorities to silence his uncompromising confession of Christ's full humanity & divinity.

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## October 28: St. Parasceva of Iconium

The Great Martyr Paraskeva of Iconium, lived during the third century in a rich and pious family. The parents of the saint especially revered Friday, the day of the Passion of the Lord, and therefore they called their daughter Paraskeva. This name, Paraskeva, also means Friday.

Young Paraskeva with all her heart loved purity and the loftiness of the virginal life, and she took a vow of celibacy. She wanted to devote all her life to God and to enlighten pagans with the light of Christ.

Because of her confession of the Orthodox Faith, the pagans in a frenzy seized her and brought her to the city prefect. They demanded that she offer unholy sacrifice to the pagan idols. With a steady heart, and trusting on God, the saint refused this demand. For this she underwent great torments: after stripping her, they tied her to a tree and beat her with rods. Then the torturers raked her pure body with iron claws. Finally, they threw her into prison, exhausted by the torture and lacerated to the bone. But God did not forsake the holy sufferer, and miraculously healed her wounds. Not heeding this divine miracle, the executioners continued with their torture of St Paraskeva, and finally, they cut off her head.

St Paraskeva has always enjoyed a special love and veneration among the Orthodox people. Many pious customs and observances are associated with her. In the ancient Russian accounts of the Saints' Lives, the name of the Great Martyr is inscribed as: "St Paraskeva, also called Piatnitsa (in Russian: Friday)." Churches dedicated to St Paraskeva in antiquity were given the name Piatnitsa. Small wayside chapels in Rus received the name Piatnitsa. The simple Russian people called the Martyr Paraskeva variously Piatnitsa, Piatina, Petka.

Icons of St Paraskeva were especially venerated and embellished by the faithful. Russian iconographers usually depicted the martyr as an austere ascetic, tall of stature, with a radiant crown upon her head. Icons of the saint guard pious and happy households. By Church belief, St Paraskeva is protectress of fields and cattle. Therefore, on her Feastday it was the custom to bring fruit to church to be blessed. These blessed objects were kept until the following year. Moreover, St Paraskeva is invoked for protection of cattle from disease. She is also a healer of people from grievous illness of both body and soul.

St. Parasceva of Iconium is one of three saints of that name commemorated in the Orthodox Church. The second, St. Parasceva of Rome, was a martyr in the second century and is commemorated July 26. The third, St. Parasceva of Serbia, was an eleventh-century nun who is commemorated on October 14.

## October 28: St. Athanasius of Constantinople

Saint Athanasius I, Patriarch of Constantinople (1289-1293; 1303-1311), in the world Alexius, was from Adrianopolis. While still in his youth, thriving upon the knowledge of the wisdom of Christ, he left his home and went to Thessalonica, where he was tonsured in one of the monasteries with the name Acacius. He soon withdrew to Mount Athos and entered the brethren of the Esphigmenou monastery, where for three years he served in the trapeza. In his works and his ascetic deeds he acquired the gift of tears, and by his virtuous acts he won the overall goodwill of the brethren.

Shunning praise, Acacius humbly left Mt. Athos at first for the holy places in Jerusalem, and then to Mount Patra, where for a long time he lived ascetically as an hermit. From there the ascetic transferred to the Auxention monastery, and then to Mount Galanteia to the monastery of Blessed Lazarus, where he accepted the great angelic schema with the name Athanasius, was ordained a priest and became ecclesiarch (monk in charge of the sacred relics and vessels in the church). Here the saint was granted a divine revelation: he heard the Voice of the Lord from a crucifix, summoning him to pastoral service.

Wishing to strengthen his spirit still more in silence and prayer, St Athanasius again settled on Mount Athos after ten years. But because of disorders arising there he returned to Mount Galanteia. Here also he was not long to remain in solitude. Many people thronged to him for pastoral guidance, and so he organized a women's monastery there.

During this time the throne of the Church of Constantinople fell vacant after the disturbances and disorder of the period of the Patriarch John Bekkos. At the suggestion of the pious emperor Andronicus Paleologos, a council of hierarchs and clergy unanimously chose St Athanasius to the Patriarchal throne of the Church in 1289.

Patriarch Athanasius began fervently to fulfill his new obedience and did much for strengthening the Church. His strictness of conviction roused the dissatisfaction of influential clergy, and in 1293 he was compelled to resign the throne and to retire again to his own monastery, where he lived an ascetic life in solitude. In 1303 he was again entrusted with the staff of patriarchal service, which he worthily fulfilled for another seven years. In 1308 St Athanasius established St Peter as Metropolitan of Kiev and All Rus (December 21).

Again, because of some sort of dissatisfaction, and not wanting to be the cause of church discord, St Athanasius resigned the governance of the Church in 1311. He departed to his own monastery, devoting

himself fully to monastic deeds.

Toward the end of his life, the saint was again found worthy to behold Christ. The Lord reproached him because Athanasius had not carried out his pastoral duty to the end. Weeping, the saint repented of his cowardice and received from the Lord both forgiveness and the gift of wonderworking. St Athanasius died at the age of 100.

### The Path to Confession

*Fr. Artemy Vladimirov*

*This is an excerpt from a book written to help children prepare for Confession but which also holds much benefit for adults who peruse it.*

#### Envy, Greed, Lying, and Stealing

Here is something else that is very important to know as you prepare for Confession. Some sins (the especially serious ones) must be left with the priest at Confession and not repeated. The Christian promises to do this in the presence of God Himself, and he must fulfill this promise. There are other spiritual illnesses, however, that can't be cured so quickly, but they will be healed if a Christian patiently perseveres, is attentive to himself, and frequently partakes of the Sacraments. For example, having repented of a dishonest act like stealing, we are freed from the sin and won't repeat it. People often find, however, that they aren't able to rid themselves so quickly of judgment, vanity, pride, or irritability. Don't let this disturb you, dear reader. You aren't upset because you have to wash your hands every day, or because you often wash your clothes, even though you know that they will soon be soiled again. Those who make confession the foundation of their spiritual life will, little by little, rid themselves completely of their soul's maladies, no matter how widespread or serious. How great is our God, and how infinite is His mercy to those who truly repent!

But now we must battle with envy, greed, lying, and stealing. The defilement of envy is one of the most disgraceful of all human sins, and enviers are undoubtedly the slaves of an impure spirit. It is said that every human passion leaves its stamp upon a man's face. The mark of envy is that it sucks the joy out of a Christian, leaving his face pale and sometimes even tinged with a sickly shade of green. Of course, it hasn't taken possession of us all—but many of us have felt it stirring in our hearts.

*Forgive us, Merciful Lord!*

We have already heard the apostolic commandment "Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep." Let anyone who becomes gloomy and grumbles over his own fate when he hears of someone else's success, or rejoices at the rumor of a neighbor's misfortune, now repent with deep contrition and tears!

*Forgive us, Merciful Lord!*

You all sense how close envy and anger are—they are brother and sister, and their father is the devil himself. Perhaps envy has plunged some of our

readers into meanness, dissatisfaction, and fruitless complaining, making them unhappy and resentful of life itself?

*Forgive us, Merciful Lord!*

Do you want to be healed of this vile feeling? Try to always be pleased and grateful to the Lord for what you have without daydreaming about things that haven't been given to you. The Holy Apostle Paul says that it is a great gain "to have godliness with contentment...for we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out."

*Forgive us, Merciful Lord.*

Here is a wonderful prayer, which will cure envy and discontent: "Lord, I thank you for all that I have, and I thank you three times as much for all that I don't have!"

There is an old word, "avarice," or the "love of silver," which in the Holy Scriptures is called "the root of all evil." It means not only particularly liking money, but caring too much for any earthly thing. In the Gospel, avarice is also called the "service of mammon." In children's language, this sin is called by the unpleasant word "greed." Before we even begin to recount all the deeds connected to it, let's say together: *Forgive us, Merciful Lord!*

"You little piggy!" This is how children usually tease the young worshipper of this ancient passion. Has anyone justly deserved this nickname? Greedy people behave themselves ignobly; they never share, even with their friends, and they are always trying to figure out whom they can get something from, forgetting the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

*Merciful Lord, when we meet our family and friends, we gaze with interest not at their faces, but at their purses and pockets! Forgive us sinners!*

When children are ill with greediness, their little eyes stare suspiciously, their movements are restless, the hands grab: they hold tight and won't let go! About them we say in fun, "The eyes are greedy, the hands are grabby." Were you ever forced to play such a role?

*Forgive us, Merciful Lord!*

When vanity makes acquaintance with avarice, we often boast about our possessions, or those of our family and friends. Have we made another child feel bad by bragging about our wonderful toys, our new bicycle or computer, or our incomparable talents? Or, on the other hand, seeing our neighbor in the newest fashion, did we burn with envy and make our parents' lives miserable until we were dressed like twin apes? Worst of all is when we respect others not because they're made in the image of God but for what they own or how much money "they're worth." Muddy little piglets are more noble than some of us.

*Forgive us, Merciful Lord!*

How much disgrace and shame will fall upon the greedy person who hides his unshared treasures—not only if they are suddenly discovered, but if his secret cubbyhole turns out to contain things belonging to

others! If anything like this has happened to any of us even in early childhood:

*Forgive us, Merciful Lord!*

And now we must speak more thoroughly about stealing. Stealing is sometimes called “Judas’s sin” because Judas was a thief who carried the bag filled with money that people offered to the apostles for charity. The unworthy disciple secretly used this money. Stealing is a deadly sin about which the Gospel strongly warns: “Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers . . . nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the Kingdom of God.” Everything that has been taken without permission, even things that we thought at the time were small—like apples or oranges from someone else’s trees—are stolen!

*Forgive us, Merciful Lord!*

Children, unfortunately, sometimes allow candy or small toys to slip into their pockets from the store shelves unpaid for. If any of us has such criminal fingers, *Forgive us, Merciful Lord!*

Others filch from their mothers’ purses, a despicable offense against the one who gave us life.

*Forgive us, Merciful Lord!*

Even today in some eastern countries, the law decrees that the punishment for stealing it to cut off the right hand! Let us all admit together that our hands and feet are still attached only by the mercy of our long-suffering Lord.

We repent! We’ve sinned before Thee, O Lord! How disgusting it is to steal! How unrecognizably it changes a person! The thief, ill at ease, sneaks along the sidewalk hoping he won’t be noticed. Wretch! God sees everything from heaven! The thief is so afraid that someone will spot him that, as the Russian proverb says, “Even his hat is on fire.” His whole appearance gives him away. Does anyone see himself in this picture, even if it happened long ago? You can’t pretend it’s not true.

*Forgive us, Merciful Lord!*

Can you imagine how shameful it is for parents to find out that their son is a little thief? Have we given them such sorrow? Perhaps we’ve only taken something once—but how that stolen thing burnt like a red hot coal in the palm of our hand! Others, caught in the act, are so ashamed that they wish the earth would open up and swallow them alive!

*Forgive us, Merciful Lord!*

Look carefully over your things: books, toys, clothes, whatever you have. If you find something that belongs to someone else, and you remember whom you’ve take it from, you must first give it back and then go the priest to repent. Some people even forget whom they’ve stolen from.

*Forgive us, Merciful Lord!*

“The repentant head won’t be cut off by the sword,” folk wisdom teaches us. But have we all admitted our stealing as forthrightly as we stole? Some children are called “Little imps” because even

when they are caught they deny their wrongdoing, make up excuses, and blame others, bringing down trouble on innocent heads.

*Forgive us, Merciful Lord!*

Remember, my friends, that if you don’t repent today, if you don’t have enough courage to admit everything in confession, this shameful sin will ultimately enslave you. It will turn into a habit, a disease, and will lead to tragedy!

*Forgive us, Merciful Lord!*

Yes, all the vices are tied to each other by one long hellish chain that can only be broken by the power of God in the sacrament of Confession. You can see for yourself how dishonest leads to deception, causing people to twist their words and to sin by lying.

*Forgive us, Merciful Lord!*

Remembering the past, let us repent of every word of untruth: all the lies, deception, and cunning, especially toward our parents, with whom above all we must be frank and truthful!

*Forgive us, Merciful Lord! Help us to change so that Confession will ease our minds and heal our consciences! Have mercy on us sinners!*

### **The Power in Guarding the Tongue**

When Abba Macarius was praying in his cell on one occasion, he heard a voice from God, which said, “Macarius, thou hast not yet attained to the state of excellence of two women who are in such and such a city.” The old man rose up in the morning, and took in his hand a palm stick, and he began to set out on the road to that city. Now, therefore, when he had arrived at the city, and learned the place of the abode of the two women, he knocked at the door, and there went forth one of the women and brought him into the house.

And when he had been sitting down for a little, the other woman came in, and he called them to him, and they came nigh and sat down before him. Then the old man said to them, “On your account I have made this long journey, and have performed all this labor, and with great difficulty have come from the desert; tell me, then, what are thy works?”

And they said unto him, “Believe us, O father; neither of us hath ever been absent from, or kept herself from her husband’s couch up to this day; what work, then, wouldest thou see in us?”

Then the old man made apologies to them and entreated them to reveal to him and to show him their spiritual labor, and therefore they said unto him, “According to worldly considerations we are strangers one to the other, for we are not kinsfolk, but it fell out that the two of us married two men who are brethren. And behold, up to this present we have lived in this house for twelve years, and we have never wanted to quarrel with each other, and neither of us hath spoken one abominable word of abuse to her companion. Now we made up our minds together

to leave our husbands and to join the army of virgins, but, although we entreated our husbands earnestly to allow us to do so, they would not undertake to send us away. And as we were unable to do that which we wished, we made a promise between ourselves and God that, until death, no worldly word should go forth from our mouths."

Now when Macarius heard this, he said, "Truly, virginity by itself is nothing, nor marriage, nor life as a monk, nor life in the world; for God seeketh the love of a man, and giveth the Spirit unto him."

### God is Our Ally in the Struggle

St. Symeon the New Theologian

When God endowed us with free will, giving commandments to teach us instead how we must oppose our adversaries, He left it to the free choice of each either to oppose and vanquish the enemy, or to relax and be miserably defeated by him. Nor does He leave us entirely to ourselves—for He knows the weakness of human nature—but rather is present Himself with us and, indeed, allies Himself with those who choose to struggle, and mysteriously imbues us with strength, and Himself, not we, accomplishes the victory over the adversary....

God,...who is mighty and invincible, becomes, as we just said, an ally of those who willingly choose to do battle with the enemy, and he establishes them as victors over the cunning of the devil. He does not, however, compel to this war any who do not so choose, in order that He not destroy the power of choice which is proper to our reasoning nature, made according to His own image, and bring us down to the level of unreasoning brutes.

### On the Need to Renew Spiritual Knowledge

St. John of Kronstadt (+1908)

Often, in matters of ordinary human knowledge, we learn a subject thoroughly once and for all: during the whole of our lifetime, our knowledge of it is not obscured. But in matters of faith and religion, this is not the case—we think that once we have learnt, felt, and touched it, the subject will ever after be clear, tangible, and beloved of our soul; but it is not so. A thousand times it will be obscured from us, removed from us, and, as it were, vanish away from us, so that at times we feel completely indifferent to that by which we used to live and breathe; and sometimes it will be necessary for us to clear the way to it by sighs and tears, in order to see it clearly once more, to grasp and embrace it with all our heart. This is caused by sin. *Priest's comment: Let us never think we know something simply because we have "heard it before!"*

### Offerings of Wine and Oil

On the candle table may be found a new sheet for making offerings for others.

These offerings are for Olive Oil, which is used for anointing people and burning before the icons,

and for Altar Wine, which is used at the Divine Liturgy and at Litas. Offerings may be made for the benefit of Orthodox and Non-Orthodox alike.

When you sign-up, please make your offering at the same time. You should also offer a prayer of supplication or thanksgiving along with the offering. The names of those for whom the offering is made are published in the bulletin for others to join you in prayer.

An offering of olive oil is \$5; an offering of altar wine \$10.

Offerings may be offered for the following: thanksgiving, nameday, birthday, travel, safety, illness, health, anniversary, graduation, job seeking, special need, in honor of a saint, a special event, a memorial gift (in memory of one departed), etc.

On the offering sheet, print your name, the name of the person for whom you are making the offering and, if you wish, the reason for the offering. Place it in the offering basket on the candle basket.

### The Value of the Jesus Prayer

The prayer "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me the sinner", consists of two basic points: the dogmatic one— acknowledgement of the Divinity of Christ—and the suppliant one— supplication for our salvation. That is, the confession of faith in Christ is connected with the confession of our inability to be saved of our own accord. This says everything, and the whole struggle of the Christian is based on these two points: faith in Christ and awareness of our sinfulness. The "Jesus Prayer", therefore, expresses all the effort of the faithful in a few words and summarizes all the dogmatic teaching of our Orthodox Church.

We acquire this double knowledge through the Jesus Prayer. St. Maximus points out that the passion of pride consists of *two ignorances*: the ignorance of the Divine power and the ignorance of human weakness. And this doubt ignorance creates a "confused mind". Proud, therefore, is the man of ignorance, whereas, on the contrary, humble is the man of *double knowledge*. The latter knows his own weakness and the power of Christ. So, we acknowledge and confess the power of Christ (Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God) as well as our own weakness (have mercy on me the sinner) through the Jesus Prayer. We acquire in this way the blessed state of humility. Where there is humility, there also is the grace of Christ, and this grace is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Can you see, then, the worth of the Jesus Prayer? Can you see that we can obtain the Kingdom of God by its power?

### Upcoming Events 2012

31 October: Wednesday, 7:00 p.m. All Saints Party  
21 January 2013: Feast of St. Maximus and the First Annual St. Maximus Memorial Lecture

**GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!**